

Are you afraid of the dark? by OrangeLovePerson

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Summary: Mileven Halloween Fun! This will be a bunch of Halloween-themed one-shots, featuring The Party, The Clash and the world's coolest babysitter. Fluffy and a wee bit scary. Happy October, y'all! xx

1. Chapter 1

A.N.: Hey guys! I need to say sorry for not posting anything lately. I recently moved to beautiful Belgium, and everything's still a little scary. That won't stop me from providing you with some Mileven-themed Halloween-stuff, though!

I borrowed the title for this story from an adorable old Nickelodeon show some of you might remember. This first chapter includes a horror story that terrified me when I was eight, so read at your own risk, haha! Bye!
xx ^

„I think we're not doing this right.", Mike mumbled, embarrassedly scratching his neck, and staring down at the baby swimming pool. It was just about three feet in size, how difficult could it really be to get that thing up?

Pretty difficult, as it turns out. They'd been standing there for about twenty minutes now, each of them taking turns with the dusty old bicycle pump, but no matter how hard they tried, the edges of the tiny swimming pool stayed flat on the floor.

„Let me try one more time.", Dustin said, kneeling down and observing the plastic for what seemed like the millionth time. Lucas groaned. „Is it really that important, guys? Can't we just forget about that game?"

„My mom says it's really fun.", Will shrugged, sitting down on the floor next to Dustin. „It's supposed to be a classical Halloween thing."

„Yeah, cheer up Lucas! We've won, like, four science fairs by now, we'll get that thing up in no time.", Dustin agreed, smiling widely, as he kept searching for the mysterious hole in the plastic.

„We should probably dunk it in water.", Will suggested. „If we fill our bathtub with water and put the pool inside, we can blow it up a little and see where the air is coming out. Like, where the bubbles are."

„Yeah, but that will take ages..."

„You okay there, El?”, Mike asked, turning around and looking at her, voice going a tiny bit softer as he noticed her watching them with quiet interest. She nodded, giving him a small smile from her spot on the couch, and with a tiny smile of his own Mike turned around again before Lucas or Dustin could make some kind of teasing remark. He was just glad she didn't seem completely bored yet, given the way they were currently wasting their shared afternoon with something so annoying and time-consuming. Also, she looked really nice today, with her light-blue skirt and all that. It made him blush a little if he thought too much about it.

Mike just wanted everything to be perfect. Like, not necessarily *right now*, because today definitely wasn't particularly exciting or *perfect*, but next Saturday would hopefully be. It was El's *first* Halloween, after all. The best day of the year, and she'd experience it for the first time, ever, and if this party thing they'd planned turned out to be lame, Mike knew he'd feel bad about it *forever* - or at least for several weeks. She hadn't had a normal childhood, after all, but she deserved one more than anything, and for someone who'd found Halloween to be one of the best things about *his* childhood, the stakes were pretty high. She should have this, too, *Halloween*. With him, and the others, and candy, and a lot of awesome, scary stuff. Mike wanted this to work out great *so* badly, he'd basically devoted half of every school lesson of the past week to distracted thoughts about the party they'd planned. It *had* to be cool.

„I could help you.”, he heard her suggest, right then, and just like the others he spun back around to look at her. El's eyes were aimed at the tiny pool, her gaze contemplative.

„Um... Okay, sure!”, Dustin nodded, smiling friendly at her. „What did you have in mind, El?”

She stood up, tentatively kneeling between her friends, and gently reaching out for the plastic of the tiny pool. Then, with a weird, fizzling sound and in a movement almost too quick to be true, the pool was blown up – the two rings that marked the walls of it filled with air, and standing perfectly straight between them. She closed her eyes for a moment, before pointing at a particular point close to Will's elbow. „There.”, she stated, before moving her finger a few inches left, pointing at something close to Lucas' knee, „And there.”

Mike eyed her confusedly, not sure what she was talking about, but a little in awe at how quickly she'd managed to get the pool up for them, with her powers. Will, however, seemed to know what she meant.

„That's where the holes are? Do you feel the air coming out there?”, he asked, questioningly looking at her. El nodded, pointing at the same two spots again. She took Dustin's hand, who sat next to her, and guided his finger to one of the spots they'd been looking for on the pool surface. „Yep! That's definitely where the air is coming from.”, he agreed, probably feeling it against his fingertip, and grinning a dimply grin. „Mike, could you pass me the ducktape?”

So, with El's help, that little problem was fixed quicker than it would otherwise have been. Now, all they'd have to do on Saturday was fill the baby pool up with water and drop some apples in there. And then they could play this „bobbing the apples”-game that Will had been talking about, something Mike could vaguely remember to have done a few years ago on some birthday party already, but would happily try again. You were supposed to bend over the water and try to catch some of the apples with your mouth, without using your hands. It might be fun! Or super embarrassing, but Mike was willing to give it a try.

And then they'd soon put all those garlands up in his basement – the ones with the purple bats he'd bought with his mom, and then the older ones with the pumpkins that he'd finally found again, in their attic. And then Mike would of course also figure out what to put on the walls or on the chairs or the table, because maybe they still had these fake-spider-webs from two years ago somewhere, and that would also look really scary and cool. And then they'd have to snitch pumpkins, of course, and he'd have to make sure to choose some really good knives for that, since he didn't want that to take too long or be to hard... Man, there was still so much he wanted to get done, and only a few days left!

„Mike?”, she asked, right then, and he looked up at her from his spot on the couch. Something about the way she sat there in the fort, cross-legged and with his walkie in her lap, made Mike's heart stop for half a second.

Sometimes it was still crazy to have her back, even now, almost a year later. He'd missed her all the time, and thought about her all the time, and talked to her all the time... And a part of him had been completely lost and hollow and broken, while another part of him had still felt her around.

It had hurt so much, for so many days, so many nights... And now, El was back. And she was in High School with them, and if Mike wanted to walk over there and take her in his arms right now, nothing would stop him. She'd put her arms around him, too, and he'd breathe her warmth in, and her hair would be in his face, her laughter in his ears.

It was a dizzying thought.

„Yes, El?”

„Mike, can you tell me a scary story?”

He blinked, then chuckled. „What?”

She pushed a strand of hair behind her ear, perhaps a little self-conscious. „Can you tell me a scary story, Mike? Hop doesn't know any.”

Mike stood up and came over to her, wanting to be closer. He kneeled in front of her before crossing his legs, too, and one of them must have reached out for the other, because suddenly their hands were touching. Mike pulled their intertwined fingers on top of his right knee, loving the way their palms grazed each other. El's hands were often a little cold, for some reason, but that was good because it gave Mike an excuse to hold them in his warmer ones all the more often. It was awesome, actually.

„Why do you want to hear a horror story, El?”, he grinned, when her light brown eyes were back on his face. She shrugged.

„It's Halloween.”, she explained, looking expectant.

„Hm.”, Mike hummed, and contemplated this. He'd already thought about everyone telling some horror stories, next Saturday, especially because both Dustin and he were pretty good with that: Telling all their favourite horror stories to the others, and making them a tiny

bit scarier, year by year.

And Will always made the best expressions, looking really caught up in the story, and even Lucas gasped and seemed excited in those moments. Also, Max would be there on Saturday, so maybe they'd even hear some totally new stories this time. Most of the ones the boys knew had already been told, at some point, but maybe kids in California had a different horror story repertoire than the ones in Hawkins?

But right now, sitting here with El in his quiet, low-lit basement, while wind crashed against the windows and while heavy autumn-rain was falling outside, Mike felt like telling her something scary would be great, too. Not something super-scary, of course! God, the last thing he wanted to do was give her additional nightmares! Or to make her feel unsafe at night, when she sat all alone in her cabin, waiting for the chief to come home.

But something *slightly* scary? While she eyed him like this, all curious and excited, and where he could just lean over and hug her as soon as she got too scared? That seemed... perfect, didn't it?

Her very first scary story, ever.

It *did* sound like a nice plan.

Mike cleared his throat.

„Okay, so how scary do you mean?”, he smiled, his eyes lighting up at the thought. „Scary like *Gremlins* or scary like *Alien*?“

She beamed back, her dimples showing and making Mike's insides melt. „Scary like *The Shining*.“, she stated, grinning when she saw his eyes widen a little.

He laughed. „Okay, I'll try. But it's probably not *that* scary.“

„That's okay, Mike.“, she allowed, and they both giggled.

„Alright, er... I think I know which one to tell you...“

So... It was a dark and scary night. The rain was falling loudly against

the windows, and no one was on the street anymore.", Mike began, lowering his voice to make it deep and dramatic.

„Oh!", he suddenly remembered, causing El to jump a little, „Wait a second, I've got to..-"

Mike jumped up, reaching for the big flashlight that stood on one of the basement shelves, and dropped back down in front of her.

Mike quickly checked if the batteries were still working, and they actually were. He smiled, pushing the tiny button down again and aiming the cone of light right at his face, bottom-up.

„There, now it looks really scary when I talk, right?", he asked, pleased with himself for this idea. Eleven nodded, a little amusedly. Mike cleared his throat again, and jumped back into the story, voice back to a raspy, low volume.

„The rain was falling into the dark, dark night. The only person outside anymore at this hour was a taxi driver in his car, cruising around, street after street, in hopes of finding another passenger in this black, stormy city. He needed money, and he wasn't tired yet, so he kept driving around."

El was listening intently, he could tell, and something about these situations always made Mike feel proud beyond words... He loved talking to her, really. Even if it was in a weird, scary voice, while telling her a horror story. Or maybe especially then.

„The taxi driver suddenly saw a man in the darkness. A very pale, very strange looking man. His jacket was torn and his shirt was ripped, but he didn't even seem to be cold at all. His eyes were super weird and scary, and he seemed like he wanted to enter the taxi. So the taxi driver stopped and let the window down, to talk to the scary man."

El's breathing changed a little bit, like she was starting to get nervous, and Mike quickly looked up from their joined hands to meet her eyes. She nodded slightly at him, wanting him to continue, and Mike rubbed a tiny circle against her palm before talking again.

„*The taxi driver asked: 'Good evening, Sir, where do you want to go, do*

you need a ride?"'

El's lips twitched from the funny voice Mike had used, and he felt his own curve into a smile, too.

„And the scary man replied: 'I'd like to go the graveyard, Mister. Can you drive me to the graveyard?"'

She scooted a little closer to Mike, on the basement floor. „Graveyard?", she asked, her eyebrows turning into a frown. Maybe she'd heard that word before, but couldn't exactly place it anymore, right now... Or maybe it had just never come up, yet...

„M-hm.", Mike replied, his voice back to soft and normal. „That's where the dead people stay, you know? Where people are buried? It's normally nice there, like a garden."

El nodded, her eyes understanding and less agitated. Mike continued.

„Of course I can drive you to the graveyard, Sir!", said the funny-sounding Taxi-driver in Mike's story. *„'Come in, sit! It's raining out there!"*

So the scary man sat down, and the taxi started driving. Once they were at the graveyard, the scary man said: 'Wait for me here, please. I'll be back in about ten minutes.' And then the taxi driver waited ten minutes, and the guy actually came back.

But there was a tiny spot of something red on his shirt, like ketchup, and the taxi driver found that really, really weird, but didn't say anything about it. The scary man came back inside, and told the taxi driver to drive him to yet another graveyard, a different one this time.

While they were driving, the taxi driver constantly felt like the man was watching him from the back seat, and he was getting a really weird feeling, but he tried to ignore it. When they arrived at the second graveyard, the man wanted to step outside again, for ten minutes, and again the taxi driver waited for the scary man.

This time, though, as the man came back, almost his entire shirt was full of something red, and again that didn't make any sense to the taxi driver. He really wanted to stop driving the scary man around, but he had given

him a lot of money already, so the taxi driver felt like he had to keep driving."

Mike's voice had constantly gotten quieter and raspier as his story went on, and he loved the way El was leaning forward and staring at him, her breath caught in her throat. He was really glad that she didn't find the story boring. He was almost whispering, now.

„After the third graveyard, the scary man came back to the taxi, and the taxi driver got really, really afraid. The scary man had a completely red face, there was, like, blood all over it... –"

Mike stopped quickly, his eyes suddenly wide.

„Not like, when you use your powers!“, he assured El, back in his normal voice, worried that she was taking it the wrong way, „That's like, not scary! I mean, it kind of is, but only because we're worried about you, and not because *you're* scary! You're not, I swear!“ Mike was starting to get really nervous that he might have accidentally hurt her, and only when he saw El's tiny smirk did he stop feeling like a complete wastoid again.

„Mike, it's okay. Keep going.“, she pleaded, softly, and he could see that she was really curious about the end of the story. He quickly tried to focus on his mysterious, frightening voice again.

„So, the man had a very red face, and it looked like there was blood all over it. The taxi driver saw that, too, so he turned around to the scary man. And then he asked the scary man:

Are you a vampire?“

Mike's eyes found El's, staying quiet for about twenty second. He wanted to create a dramatic pause, making El really nervous, and then he said, louder than ever.

„YES!“

And it worked, El totally jumped at the unexpected noise, a big grin quickly taking over as she realised that this had been part of Mike's plan all along. She giggled, quietly, and he laughed, too, switching the flashlight off and focusing completely on her hand in his, once

more.

„The end.“, Mike added, smiling at her. „Did you like it?“

„Yes.“, she assured him, warm brown eyes all golden in the low basement light. „Fun.“, she decided, emphatically.

„Cool.“, he answered, happy about that.

„But, Mike?“, she asked, meeting his gaze with a questioning frown,

„Yes, El?“

She scooted a little closer to him again, looking up through dark lashes,

„What is a vampire?“

Mike paused, surprisedly, before starting to laugh again. El joined in, their noses bumping together gently as he leaned in and pressed a tiny kiss to her temple, a second later.

There was still a lot of stuff Eleven didn't know about this whole 'Halloween'-thing, Mike realised. But as long as long as she stayed close to him and smiled like that, he really couldn't wait to explain it all to her.

It would be the best day of the year, and it would be the best year of them all.

(The end.)

2. Chapter 2

A.N.: I know, I know, I said this story would include the whole Party, and yet here I am again posting something strictly Mileven. :/ Sue me. (Next one will be more diverse, I promise.) Love you all! xx

Strange noises

The shower was *cold*.

Not *terribly cold*, - in fact, it was so cold that it almost felt warm against her flushed, completely freezing skin. El had just come in from outside, and for at least 20 seconds, her body wasn't entirely sure whether the water that now touched it was completely cold or way too hot.

(Wasn't that something they'd talked about in her science class, once? How touching an ice cube can make your fingers a little numb, and then other temperatures can sometimes confuse them, for a few seconds? Mike might remember, and be able to explain this whole shower-mystery to her if she told him about it later, El thought. But for now, she wanted to fight the frostiness in her bones.)

As El had realized just how cold the water was, the shivering got worse, goosebumps all over her legs and arms. She wanted to be warm again, wanted under her cozy blankets. So El quickly used a towel to dry herself off, and got into her warmest pajama shirt and sweatpants.

„Hop?”, she said, as she came out of the bathroom.

„Hmm?”, he replied, not looking up from his notes. He was reading through some papers for work again, and while El wasn't entirely sure what they were about, she had a feeling his recent chief-of-police-stuff was even more boring than the normal chief-of-police-stuff . He almost looked like he'd fall asleep right there over the coffee table, so boring seemed his work.

„The shower.”, she stated, in her usual, quiet tone. Hop was still eyeing his notes, tiredly.

„What about it?"

When El didn't reply immediately, he finally cast a glance at her. He probably noticed how she was shivering, despite all the layers. He frowned, looking annoyed.

„Ahhh, no. It's doing that thing again, isn't it?"

Eleven nodded, emphatically. „Cold."

„Son of a..- Urgh, I thought I already fixed that the last time!", he fussed, rubbing his eyes.

„It's back.", El commented, shrugging.

It's not like she felt all that bad about not being able to take a warm shower for the next few days, perhaps – now that it was so chilly outside, El barely sweat, anyway, so it wasn't like she'd be feeling terribly yucky even without showering. Also, El had managed to live for several weeks in Mirkwood, last winter, - no shower or warmth whatsoever, - and that had been a lot worse than how she was cold right *now*. So, so much worse.

Hopper, however, often got really grumpy when the shower suddenly turned ice cold, so El thought she should better inform him right away.

He sighed.

„I'll have a look at it again tomorrow, get the old system back on track." Yawning, he reached an arm out to El, so she'd quickly hug him before disappearing into her room again. They did that now, she and Hop. Hugging. It was nice, like an actual Dad hugging his actual El. Having the same last name was nice, too. Eleven wouldn't really have wanted a made-up one, or something like that. Hop and her looked like a family, now.

„Sleep well, you need your energy for school tomorrow. And don't you chat with Wheeler too long on the walkie, you hear me?"

El rolled her eyes. „Only ten minutes.", she stated, seriously. They both knew that it would probably be closer to something like twenty,

but El secretly thought that Hop didn't mind so much, after all. He knew how much Mike always had to say, and how much El liked to listen, then, and ten minutes were just not enough sometimes!

„Sure, go ahead with your ten minutes, then.", he replied, sort of fondly, and El smiled a soft smile before slipping into her room.

Covers tucked warmly around her sides, her head high on the fluffy pillow, El felt like everything was *perfect*, despite how short and cold the shower had been. But then, everything got even better.

„El?", the walkie fizzled, Mike's voice coming out of the speaker. „El, it's Mike, are you there? Over."

She grabbed the tool from her night stand, eager and happy, and pressed it to her ear.

„Yes, Mike. Hi."

He breathed in, she could hear it clearly. Even through the static, the sound of his sigh made El all tingly.

„El, hey! How was dinner at Will's? Over." Mike sounded happy, too, wanting to know exactly what she'd been up to during the few hours since they'd last seen each other. El understood it, though. She also felt curious and a somewhat longing whenever she and Mike were apart. And if Mike spend *nearly* as much time thinking about her, as she did thinking about him, then he probably also didn't like the idea of not hearing her voice for more than half a day.

El thought back to her dinner with the Byers, - from playing Twister with Joyce and Jonathan, and watching Will explain every rule of chess to her until almost understanding it enough to beat him at the game once or twice, afterwards,- to her and Will's curious glances at Hop and Joyce, who were *really* friendly with each other, lately...- it had been a lovely evening. There was still time for homework tomorrow, with it being only Friday, and perhaps she and Max would study for Geography together for a little while on Sunday.

Eleven told Mike about all of this, her voice quiet and content. Now and then, he would ask questions or make a comment, and the two of

them giggled a little.

And *then* Mike had quite a lot of stuff to talk about, too, as always.

Mike told her about his good grade on today's math test, again, and about how surprised Nancy had found these news,- Nancy had never gotten an *A plus* while in Mrs. Shuester's class, she'd said! Then Mike talked about that one *STAR WARS* poster he'd rediscovered behind his desk when cleaning up, this afternoon, and about the perfume his mom had accidentally bought today- without realizing that it was the same perfume Mike's *grandma* and a lot of other, elderly ladies in their neighbourhood liked to wear. Eleven did not really get why exactly Mike found this so funny, but she laughed along with him, anyway. Mike Wheeler's laugh was irresistible, it always made her laugh, too. It was such a nice sound.

El also loved how his voice went up in excitement, when he mentioned a new slogan idea for the AV club he had had.

With him and Lucas basically founding the whole club, it was up to Mike to come up with advertisement ideas, and up to Lucas to provide some money-making-plans to expand their meager budget. The boys still weren't entirely sure, how the whole thing would turn out, in the end,- the teachers at Hawkins High were not nearly as enthusiastic about this stuff as they should be, and no one in the world could ever replace Mr. Clarke, but the Party would figure it all out, Mike was certain.

„No school should be without a proper AV club.", Mike explained, seriously.

When they both had talked for a while, and were starting to get a little sleepy, El thought about tomorrow, about what they could do together when Mike would be visiting her.

„Hey, Mike?", she mumbled, even while her eyes were drooping closed every couple seconds, tiredly.

„Yeah, El?", he rasped back, warmly. „Over.", he added, and El smiled.

„Can you tell me a scary story again, tomorrow?”

He laughed. „Really?”

El nodded, humming softly. „You are so good at them.”

She could tell that Mike was blushing, even though she wasn't watching him tonight. No, her eyes were aimed at the ceiling, heart filled with warmth and ears filled with his words.

„Yeah! Yes, I mean, sure, totally, El!”, he replied, excitedly, happily. „I'm really glad you like my scary stories.”, he added, truthfully.

„All your stories.”, she corrected him, because Mike could really make *everything* sound special. And it always made *her* feel special, too, because he seemed so eager to talk to her, so glad to have her attention on him.

Another blush on Mike's cheeks, probably. And probably pretty.

„Thanks, El.”, he rasped, gratefully and quiet and just a little sleepy.
„Over.”

And then they said goodnight, and El couldn't wait for tomorrow to come, and to be with him again.

Saturday afternoon, they were sitting on her bed, backs against the headboard and a movie playing on the small TV across the room. Not just any movie, of course: "Karate Kid", which was almost as great as Mike told her it would be, and the eager beam that flashed across his features whenever he saw her chuckle or smile at whatever happened on screen was good enough to make El want to like the movie all the more.

They had a blanket spread across their laps, a popcorn bowl between them, and they were using this 'disguise' as a shield in order to hold hands the entire time. It's not like Hopper would say anything about it, anyway, if he came in right now and saw them holding hands, - which he could, the door to her room was still open, after all,- but it was always nice to have some *privacy, get it?*

Because sometimes moments were just supposed to be theirs, El and Mike's, Mike and El's. And it was also always nice to feel Mike's thumb rub gentle circles across her skin, all soft and unhurried and in the sort of way that made El's tummy tingle. (And Mike didn't really usually do that when Hop was watching.)

Now, while they were mostly alone and hidden from sight, Mike sometimes lifted her palm up with his own, fingers still all intertwined, and then he dropped a kiss to the back of El's palm and it made her heart explode, or something.

„El?”, they heard Hop say loudly, right after Mike kissed El's hand for the sixth or seventh time, that afternoon, and as the big man approached, the two of them brought a tiny bit of extra space between their bodies. Not much... just enough to look slightly less intimate than they actually liked to be, at this point.

„Yeah?”, El replied, when Hop stood in the doorway, and paused the movie with a flick of her head.

„I'm gonna drive to the hardware store, see if I can talk to someone about our water pipes and heater, and all that.” He scratched his neck, looking grumpy. „Can't seem to find out what's the problem with that damned shower.”, Hop growled, annoyed at his lack of luck, or natural abilities as a plumber. Or at his lack of warm showers.

„Okay.”, El shrugged, almost turning back to the TV again already, while Mike next to her looked like something really good had just happened.

„El.”, Hopper interjected, making her focus on his face again, which was currently looking weirdly suspicious. He was eyeing her and Mike strangely, again. „I hope I can trust you two here with being alone for a little while?”

While Mike's nod was pretty eager, El just shrugged, confused. Hop let El stay alone at the cabin *all* the time, she really didn't get why he was often suddenly getting weird and overly worried about it when Mike was here with her. Did Hop think Mike wasn't save to be around with? But that really didn't make sense, El *knew* Hop trusted Mike. Because Mike would never, ever hurt her, she was certain.

„No funny business, Mike. You hear me?”, Hop commented, eyeing the boy sternly, and while El never quite got that sentence, either, she quite liked the way Mike always flushed and stammered a bit, when they reached that part.

(What did it mean, though? *No funny business...* Funny things are good, aren't they? *Why* no funny business? Did that mean, no jokes? Was Hop scared that Mike would say something really hilarious, and that he wouldn't be there to hear it?)

When Hop was gone, El and Mike were not even pretending to watch the movie any longer, even if they both really liked it. It's just that snuggling and kissing is more fun, actually, and so El's calve was soon grazing his and they shared the same air while he pulled her closer.

„Do you hear that?”, Mike suddenly whispered, about ten minutes later, and they both fell quiet, listening.

From the bathroom, there came a dropping sound.

„That's the shower.”, El explained, quietly, uncertain why Mike had lowered his voice. Every ten or fifteen seconds, a small noise was to be heard, the sound of something dripping on the bottom of the shower.

„I know”, he grinned, and excitement flashed across his face. „Hey, do you still want me to tell you a scary story? Because I think I know one that's *perfect* for this situation.”

El felt how the corners of her mouth slowly arched up, and quickly turned the TV off with her mind. She snuggled even closer to Mike, her eyes never leaving his.

„Tell me.”, she asked, feeling giddy as Mike's arm sneaked tighter around her back, pulling her near. El could see how he was trying to focus, and not to blush because of their proximity, while also letting his voice take on a dark and raspy texture as he began talking.

„Okay, so there was a girl.”, he started, clearing his throat. „She was very rich, so her parents had a giant, beautiful house with, like, a million rooms in it. Mostly, that was something the girl liked about

her home. But sometimes," Mike said, quietly, „Sometimes, she would get scared at night. Her parents often went out in the evening, and then she was all alone in the big house."

El tried hard to not feel sad – horror stories weren't meant to make you sad, after all. They were told to make you feel a little scared, in a good way. But she couldn't keep from remembering her own long nights at the cabin, last year, especially before she'd closed the gate and started seeing all her friends again. That year with Hop, all alone in the woods behind the cabin's curtains, while he often spend long work days away... It had been lonely and sad and terrifying, sometimes. Now and then, Hop would forget to let El know that he'd be working late, and on those days she'd always feel so scared that something might have happened to him. Or that the Bad Men were outside the cabin, somehow, waiting to attack and come in when she was all alone... Eleven had never slept until Hopper was back home, during those nights. Too scary.

But El quickly tried to erase all of that sadness from her face, the memories not something for now, for a moment when Mike wanted to do something nice for her and tell her a story. Unfortunately, he could read her quite well, at this point. So Mike noticed.

„Hey, everything okay?", he wondered, voice back to sweet and caring, his soft eyes watching her intently, apprehensively.

Eleven quickly nodded, grateful for his question, and with a slightly sceptical raise of his eyebrow, Mike went on.

„The girl had a dog, though. And whenever she got scared, at night, she reached with her hand under the bed, and then her dog would make a little sound or lick over her fingers, or something. And then she felt better, because she knew her dog was still there for her, you know?"

El smiled again, snuggling closer to Mike while he talked.

„One night, the girl heard a strange sound. She was alone at home, again, and she heard something *drop*, quietly. Like, water, or something. She went into the kitchen, because she thought the faucet in the sink wasn't turned off all the way. She made sure that it wasn't

leaking any more, and then she went back to her bed. The noise seemed gone, no more dripping to be heard. The girl reached under her bed, and her dog gently licked her fingers, so she felt like everything was normal."

„But it wasn't.", El stated, matter-of-factly. Mike nodded, darkly. „No, it wasn't. A couple minutes later, the girl heard the noise again. And this time, she went into the bathroom, and turned *that* tab off all the way. But she still heard the sound. So she went to the guest bathroom, and the tab there was turned all the way off, too, no dropping sound at all."

El furrowed her forehead.

„The girl went back into her room. She lay back in bed, trying to ignore the sound, but somehow she found it very annoying, even though it was so quiet. So she kept going from bathroom to bathroom, looking for the source of the noise. They had a lot of bathrooms in the big house, so the girl had to look almost everywhere. You know where she found it, the thing that made the sound?", Mike asked, looking up from his sleeves, and eyeing El intently. She shook her head.

„In the shower of the bathroom right next to her room.", he whispered, scarily. „But it wasn't the shower head that had made the sound, oh no. There, in the shower, hung her dog. He was dead, and the blood that dropped to the shower floor made the sound. - Drop – drop – drop."

El gasped.

„And next to it, on the wall, someone had written with blood: 'Murderers can hide under beds, too."

El felt her heart race a bit, here in the half-dark, with the sound from her *own* shower still in the background, and Mike's low, scary voice in her ear.

„The end.", he stated, switching back to his normal tone and volume. He eyed her, curiously, a smile growing back on his face. „So, did you like it?"

El smiled back, even as she wiggled closer to him on top of her sheets, still a little nervous. „It was scary.”, she told him, earnestly, enjoying how pleased he looked at that.

„Yeah?”

She nodded and bit her lip. „Mike?”, she mumbled, silently.

„Yes, El?”

„Could we... could we check if there's someone under the bed?”

She had leaned over, pressing her lips directly to his ear, while she spoke - as quietly as possible. He shivered a little, which was exciting and distracting in other ways, but mostly El was still a little unnerved by that possibility. Rationally, she knew that it was silly: She could even use her powers to *feel* that there was no one but them in her room. But now she wanted to be a hundred percent sure, wanted to check that they were really, really safe.

„Uh, sure, El!”, Mike replied, looking a little concerned and sorry for the fact that he'd made her feel unsafe, perhaps. Also, his skin was still slightly red from the way she'd just whispered in his ear... Mike was so *sweet*, sometimes.

When he'd untangled himself from her enough to peek over the edge of her bed, Mike quickly sat back up again. „Nothing there.”, he smiled, reassuringly, and just as El was about to relax again, she heard the tiny dropping sound from the bathroom, once more.

„Can we check there, too?”, she murmured, staring towards her door, and Mike realized what she had in mind. He chuckled, taking her hand and making her stand up along with him.

„If it makes you feel better.”, he shrugged, and El could see that he still felt very proud about how scary she'd found his story.

No one was in the bathroom, of course. No blood, no creepy message, just the shower head and Hopper's toolbox. Eleven heaved out a sigh, turning back around and already climbing back on her bed, a couple seconds later. Mike was right behind her, shyly snuggling on his old spot next to her.

Hopper came home not much later, and when he did El and Mike resumed their little movie-night, but up until *then* the two of them spend every second with soft kisses and warm gazes, and a whole lot of cuddling, too.

„Maybe *I* can tell *you* a scary story, sometime.”, El suggested, at one point, while her head was tucked safely under Mike's chin, his breath coming in soft puffs against her curly hair.

„Yeah, that would be cool.”, he smiled, and Eleven started to think that Halloween might be her favorite time of the year, after all.

(the end.)

3. Chapter 3

A.N: Hey guys, it's me again. This one's another standard scary story from when I was little. The next chapter contains a horror story from *Beyond Belief: Fact or Fiction*, because Jonathan Frakes is my *number one* source for cheap horror stories. (Haha. Get it? :D Anyone?)

Anyway, especially since it was Caleb's birthday on Saturday, you're getting some Lumax in that one, too. Caleb's already 17 now, can you believe that? (They're growing up so fast...) :')

Love you all, bye!

The three daughters

„Okay, I'll tell you one, but don't expect it to be amazing, yeah? I'm saving the best ones for Halloween.", Dustin explained, fumbling with his cap.

El nodded, smiling excitedly, and as a wave of heavy wind crashed against the window outside, her heart made a jump in anticipation.

They were sitting on Dustin's couch, a bunch of healthy and not-so-healthy snacks spread over the living room table, and one of Mrs. Henderson's two fluffy cats sleeping in the corner next to the heater. Eleven didn't feel all that weird about cats anymore, but she still liked to keep a bit of a distance between herself and the animal, being vaguely reminded of the lab and all that, even now.

Lucas and Dustin had played video games for most of the afternoon, while El was trying to color the front of her math binder in the prettiest way possible, and while she watched her friends play from time to time. Video games were so exciting, but also hard. For now, she felt more like watching than like playing, and luckily the others found that totally fine.

But now that Lucas, Dustin and her had started talking about Halloween, and about how awesome trick or treating would be this year, the topic of horror stories had come up once more. And, upon

hearing how Mike had already told El some, Dustin had agreed to tell her one, too. El was beaming, her pencils and folder cover long forgotten. Who doesn't like to hear a horror story in windy, dark October?

Lucas, who also seemed interested, had grabbed a bunch of smarties from the bowl on the table and was putting his controller away, as their curly-haired friend dimmed down the lights. When Dustin sat back down, El was already eagerly waiting for the scariness to start.

Dustin gave her a toothy smile and then cleared his throat. „Okay, the story is called: *The three daughters.*”

Lucas groaned loudly, and Dustin gave him a half-annoyed look. „What?”, he wondered, eyeing Lucas confusedly.

„That's like... the oldest story ever, Dustin.”, Lucas complained, shaking his head. „Come on, we're looking for some actual chills here, try a little harder!”

„Well, I remember *you* being super freaked-out by this one, not too long ago.”, the curly-haired boy answered, wiggling his eyebrows and taking a sip from his soda. „Like, I bet in sixth grade you still found this scary.”

Lucas scoffed. „As if! You couldn't even scare *Erica* with that story!”

Dustin crossed his arms in front of his chest. „First of all, I don't think your sister is easier to scare than you, Lucas. Keep dreaming.”

El had to laugh at the incredulous face Lucas gave Dustin, who just kept talking. „Second of all, why don't we let El decide later if the story was scary enough, and if she says it wasn't, *you* can tell her one you like better.”

Lucas snorted, but held up his hands in surrender. „Fine, whatever. Just start telling her your story then, already.”

„Thank you.”, Dustin allowed, grinning again before turning more towards El. Like Mike had done when he'd told her horror stories before, Dustin lowered his voice a little, trying to make it scarier:

„Once upon a time, in a town just like Hawkins, there was a father with three beautiful daughters.“ Dustin began, his voice a bit more mysterious than what El was used to from him.

„The daughters were all really into flowers, they always planted some in their little garden, and all three of them were happy whenever their father bought them some in the flower shop close to their house. One day, though, that flower shop closed down, and the three girls were really sad.“

El could imagine that. She always got really excited, too, when Hop brought home some Eggos or other special treats. So that was something she'd really miss, if they ever stopped baking Eggos. Not that Eggos were like flowers, exactly, - because nothing could ever compare to them, - but it would make her sad, too, if one of her favourite things or places in the world was gone like that.

„But the Dad wanted to bring flowers to his daughters again, so he looked for another flower shop in their part of town. When he found one, he went inside and asked the shop lady for three beautiful roses for his beautiful daughters.“

Lucas clicked his pen up and down a couple times, but stopped when he noticed Dustin's annoyed glance.

„What?“, Lucas grumbled, causing Dustin to roll his eyes a little before he kept talking. El smiled. The two of them could be funny.

„So, yeah. The Dad bought three roses that the shop lady had picked for him: A black rose, a white rose, and a red rose. He went home and his three daughters all placed the flowers in their rooms. And then, the night came.“

The very next day, one of the daughters met someone really nice, and they went on a date together. The second daughter had had a bad dream, during the last night, and started to feel really scared in her room. The third daughter, the one with the black rose, started to feel very sick, and had to stay in bed the entire day.

As the weeks went on, the father of the three girls kept buying roses for them, and, because he knew how much they'd loved the colors of the roses the first time around, he always gave them roses in the same color again.“

„That's kind of stupid, in hindsight.", Lucas murmured, taking a sip from his soda. Dustin raised an eyebrow at him.

„I just mean, it's kind of boring, anyway.", Lucas explained. „Hadn't thought of that before, but why would you surprise someone by giving them the exact same thing all the time? That's boring."

That made El feel curious. „Lucas? Do you ever surprise Max?", she asked, remembering the necklace she had seen her red-haired friend wear, a couple weeks ago... And how Max had blushed and quickly put it under the hem of her t-shirt again, once she'd noticed El's gaze.

Dustin snorted. „Yeah, Lucas? Do you? How come you're suddenly such an expert on gifting women?"

El could see how embarrassed Lucas was, even as he rolled his eyes dismissively. „Oh, shut up you two.", he replied, mostly looking at Dustin.

„Aaanyway.", Dustin grinned, clearing his throat and going back to the story. „*The girls kept getting red and white and black roses, all the time. And, after a while, the daughter with the red roses announced that she would get married, soon. It was a surprise for everyone, but her sisters and her father were happy for her when they saw her with her fiancé. It was clear that the two were very much in love, even after such a short time.*

But not everything was going well. A few weeks later, the girl who had always gotten the white roses, started to behave super weird. She finally told her family how she'd started to hear strange noises around the house at night, and that she didn't feel safe anymore. In the end, she even believed to see ghosts, and that was really scary for her.

The third daughter, though, the one with the black roses, had an even bigger problem. She was constantly feeling very, very sick, and sometimes, when she woke up, there were bruises and tiny cuts all over her legs and arms. It was like a curse."

El frowned. „Did she walk in her sleep?", she questioned, remembering what Hopper had once told her, when she'd fallen out of her bed during a nightmare.

(„Don't you become some sort of sleepwalker, now, yeah kid?”

When El had looked at Hop strangely, he'd explained: „That's someone who walks around while they sleep. Some people do that. It's really dangerous, they can fall down the stairs or hurt themselves somehow... And with your powers, we really don't want that to happen. Don't want you to accidentally blow up the house, now, do we?”

Dustin seemed to know what El was talking about, but shook his head. „No, she's not sleepwalking. It's a lot worse.”

He kept telling the story.

„As the weeks continued, the third daughter got sicker and sicker, and one morning, she didn't wake up any more. The doctors said she had pressure marks on her neck, and that she must have strangled herself somehow, while asleep. The two sisters and the father were completely devastated, and for many days, no one thought about buying flowers anymore. The neighbours and friends of the family kept bringing bouquets around, anyway.

But, one day, the father started buying flowers again. This time, he bought two black roses for his remaining two daughters, in honor of the one who had died and who had always loved dark flowers so much.”

El gasped, shaking her head. „No!”, she said, knowing that this wasn't a good idea at all.

Dustin smiled. „Yeah, that's what he did. And, soon enough, both of his other daughters were getting very, very sick, too. That's when the father started to become suspicious, for the first time.

One night, he decided to watch his children a bit more closely. So he sat in a chair next to one of his daughters' beds, waiting for something, anything, to happen.

He had almost dozed off, when he noticed something strange. The black flower on the girl's nightstand started to move around in the vase it was in. It twisted, as if someone was holding it. And then, slowly...”

Dustin took a dramatic pause, eyes wandering from El's to Lucas' face and back a couple times, „Then, slowly, fingers were starting to crawl

out of the flower. Human fingers. And the father watched and was completely shocked, but the fingers kept moving, it looked, as if an entire hand was now growing out of the flower, as if someone was starting to climb out of it...

And then, when almost an entire arm was reaching out of the black rose, he screamed, and the body pulled back again, starting to disappear in the plant again. But the father was angry, suddenly, - like, really, really angry, and shocked, so he grabbed a book from the night stand and started hitting the flower-arm with it. Again and again, as hard as he could. And then the arm was gone again, and it didn't come back the entire night.

After that, the father never bought flowers in the flower shop again, and soon his two daughters were both well again. But, as he walked down the street where the flower shop stood one more time that month, the father couldn't help but to notice that the woman behind the counter had an arm prothesis, now. Like, a plastic arm. And she's never had one, before.", Dustin said, dramatically, looking at El.

„The end."

Eleven's eyes were wide. „She did that!", El stated, thinking about the woman in the flower shop.

„Exactly.", Dustin nodded. „We don't know for sure though.", he shrugged.

Lucas frowned. „Um, yes, we do! How else did the first daughter die, huh? The flower lady was obviously a witch, or something."

„Do witches really exist?", El asked Lucas, curiously, while sitting back against the cushions. He smiled at her.

„Of course they do, El! I mean, *you* are technically one, aren't you?"

That was something she hadn't seen coming.

„What?", she mumbled, confused. Dustin shook his head.

„Bullshit, she's not a witch, Lucas!", he laughed. „She's a Jedi, if anything."

„Mike says, I'm a mage.", El quipped in, still unsure about the whole topic.

„Exactly, thanks El!", Lucas nodded. „Witch, mage... That's kind of the same."

„Woah, woah, woah!", Dustin uttered, holding his hands up. „No, it's not! Mages are cool, witches are evil, obviously."

„Not always, I mean, there's probably some stories about cool witches, too.", Lucas argued. „And if there's anyone we know who would want to build an entire house out of candy, it would probably be either you, or El, I bet!"

Dustin smirked. „Okay, that would be pretty awesome, I'll give you that.", he laughed, before looking back at El, his eyes bright and happy. „Hey, how about we do that for real? Like, there's so much candy in the kitchen already, and cookies, too, we could totally build something with that!"

Lucas raised an eyebrow, contemplating this. „You mean, like a gingerbread house? Isn't that more like, a Christmas-thing?"

Dustin shrugged his shoulders, smiling widely. „Who cares? That way, we can find out if El has an actual talent for this witch-stuff, or if we should go back to calling her a superhero instead."

She had to smile at that. If she was being entirely honest, El didn't really care how her friends referred to her, as long as they kept liking her the way they did.

Also, she turned out to be really good at building candy-houses. And if *that's* what witches do all day, then Lucas could gladly call her one as often as he liked.

(the end)

4. Chapter 4

The hand in the jar

Making out with Lucas was fun.

Like, *really* fun.

Maybe it had something to do with how surprised he always seemed, when she kissed him. Like he couldn't really believe what was happening. Later, when Max was alone in her room again, she'd always think back to these surprised looks on his face and laugh her ass off at the memory. Geez, he was such a stalker, Lucas. In a good way, though.

This time, they'd been sharing one of Billy's stupid old bean bags in the living room, her feet reaching halfway over Lucas' shins, and both of them trying to focus on the tv screen instead of on each other. They were supposed to watch this weird, spanish movie twice until next week: One time with subtitles and one time without. Max didn't really get why that was necessary, the strange, prism-break plot was not exactly complicated and she'd surely have understood it just by looking at the pictures. But she kind of liked the way she and Lucas sat here together, every now and then making some funny remarks about things they found particularly bad about the movie. So she was actually looking forward to another afternoon like this.

„Stop tickling me.“, she laughed, when Lucas' hand accidentally brushed her stomach, on its way to the popcorn bowl next to Max. He frowned, confused, and when he realized what she meant, he guffawed.

„Oh, come on, I barely touched you! Are you that ticklish, really?“

„M-hm, m-hm, sure, a total accident. Very believable.“, she replied in false-sarcasm, a grin on her lips. She was reaching for the popcorn bowl herself and put it down in her lap, between the two of them.

As Lucas smiled a little sheepishly and grabbed some popcorn from the bowl, Max couldn't help but to reach next to it and poke his

stomach slightly with her pointer finger. He smirked when he saw her frowning.

„Nope, doesn't work like that.", he told her, grinning innocently. „I'm basically tickle-proof."

Max laughed, if a little annoyed. She shook her head and tried tickling him again, to absolutely no result. „What the hell?", she complained, as Lucas snickered.

„Seriously, it's kind of impossible to tickle me.", he explained, proudly. „It's like a super-power."

Max snorted. „There *has* to be a spot where you are ticklish, though. Everyone has one."

Lucas shook his head, still grinning all confidently. „Not this guy, though, nope."

Max smiled while her eyes narrowed. „I think you're bluffing, Sinclair.", she stated.

And what began then was one of the most lively tickling-duels *Hawkins, Indiana* had ever seen. In the end, both teens were laughing like crazy and a little out of breath.

„Okay, okay, you win!", Lucas grinned, through heaving breaths, and the two of them sat back on their old spots in the big bean bag. „Maybe I *am* sort of ticklish, after all."

Max shook her head, looking around for the remote control. „Okay, we've missed like, a third of the movie already, we *reelly* need to pay attention.", she decided, knowing fully well that she probably would get bored again four or five minutes later.

„I mean, we don't *have* to.", Lucas quipped in, shrugging. „We could always say 'screw it' and just watch the thing on Saturday."

It was a tempting offer...

Max hummed, contemplating this. „So, what do you want to do instead, then?"

She didn't miss the way his gaze dropped to her mouth for half a second, right then, or the way he blushed almost invisibly. Max had to fight a knowing smirk, finally spotting the remote control and reaching for the 'off' button. And then...

Well, then Lucas's face got that hilariously surprised expression again.

A little later, when the two of them had picked up the sort of conversation that could easily fit between lazy kisses and jokes, Lucas told Max about the small bunch of horror movies he'd already borrowed for Halloween.

„I mean, it's not like Mike won't borrow any, but last year two of the tapes he got were broken, because Holly spilled her apple juice on his school bag, or something. And then we ended up watching „E.T.” for, like, the tenth time, the day before Halloween.” Lucas frowned. „I mean, it just could have been scarier, you know? So this year, I'm bringing some video tapes, too, just in case.”

Max nodded. „Makes sense. Although I highly doubt that Wheeler will risk anything *this* year. He'd probably buy a whole video store just to make sure that this freaking party ends up perfect.”

Lucas laughed, rolling his eyes. „That's true. He's not the only one like that, though. Dustin wouldn't even tell El any properly scary horror stories, yesterday, because he wants to 'save the best ones for Halloween', or something.”

Max was intrigued. „Wait, El is into horror stories now?”, she smiled, her mind already plotting something out.

Lucas shrugged. „Yeah, I mean, I guess. Why, do you know any good ones?”

Max smirked. „Don't know, depends on what you guys are used to, but given the absolute boringness of this town, I could probably scare you to death, I guess.”

He didn't seem convinced at all. „Okay, who's bluffing now?”, he chuckled, fingers poking her stomach again in a way that made Max

widen her eyes. „Oh no, don't you start that again, Stalker, that would be the death of you!”, she warned, amusedly.

„I thought your oh-so-scary horror stories were the death of me, Madmax?”

„That, too.”

„Oh, obviously.”

They both laughed.

„Okay, give it a try then!”, Lucas dared her, cheekily. She raised an eyebrow at that.

„What, you mean, tell you a horror story?”

„Uh-huh, sure.”

Max thought about that for a moment. „Hm, okay. Why not?”

She stood up from her spot on the bean-bag, to Lucas' surprise and confusion. „Where – where are you going?”, he wondered, perhaps a little annoyed at the loss of contact between them, Max noticed.

„What, you think we're gonna do this in the living room? Nope, you're coming into the basement with me. That's way scarier.”, she explained, and turned around again, her red hair flying behind her in a bow. She could have sworn her boyfriend looked a tad-bit scared, already. - Perfect.

So, here they were, then: The tiles on the floor were cold where they sat, the old walls covered in moldy, gray wallpaper. The only light in the basement came from the candle Max had just lit, - yes, *one* candle only, providing an atmosphere of '*Don't breathe to hard, because then it could be completely dark down here in just a second.*'

If there was one thing Max really enjoyed about this house they'd moved into, last year, it was the creepy, quiet basement. Sometimes, she'd sneak down here just to have some peaceful silence, when Billy had once again turned his music up too high, or when everything

upstairs was nothing but a giant, stressy mess. Max couldn't stand her step-dad, and sometimes, she couldn't even stand her mom. So, the basement it was. None of her other "family-members" came down here very often.

„So, when were you going to tell me that you share a basement with Dr. Frankenstein, Max?”, Lucas asked, looking around them in disbelief. „Seriously, this is super-spooky.”

She grinned. „Yep, it's pretty awesome. My mom only ever spends time here when she puts clothes in the washing machine, but even then she's always in a hurry. So it's basically just me here.”

„Rad!”, Lucas murmured, looking awed and a little freaked-out.

„So, the story I'll tell you is called: The hand in the glass.”

Max cleared her throat and watched him, as she talked. The orange gleam of the candle flame painted colourful shadows across his features.

„A couple years ago, a man entered an old bar in Florida. It wasn't a nice bar, it was actually pretty shabby and dirty, but the few customers that kept visiting it were enough to keep the pub running. The middle-aged man that had just walked through the door sat down in front of the barkeeper, and asked for a beer.”

„So, wait.”, Lucas stopped her, curiously. „Is this something that actually happened?”

Max smirked. „Don't know. Maybe.”, she shrugged, a twinkle in her eyes before she kept going.

„Anyway. The man ordered something and started chatting with the barkeeper, when suddenly, he noticed something super-weird next to him, and jumped in surprise. On the bar counter, there was a giant, big jar with water inside. And in the water, there was something that looked a lot like a human hand.”

„Okay, so this didn't actually happen.”, Lucas smirked.

„Oh, just wait.”, Max smiled. „Maybe you'll find it more realistic

later."

She continued with the story. „So, the man screamed a bit and was like: „Oh god, what's that?”, and the barkeeper just laughed and said: „Calm down! That's just Wendy. Well, we call it Wendy, anyway. It's an electronic toy, to scare the customers. It's hilarious!” But the guy with the beer was really scared and wanted to know why anyone would ever put that thing in a bar.

„It's from the previous owner, he was really into spooky stuff.”, the barkeeper explained. „Look”, he said, and pulled out a little remote control. He pressed one of the buttons, and suddenly...”

Max reached out to touch the jar that was currently standing in between her and Lucas, the one that held the candle,

„And suddenly, the hand behind the glass started moving, and it scratched against the jar, from the inside.”

Max mimicked the scratching movement, lightly scrabbing against the jar, the quiet sound reverberating in the completely lightless basement. Lucas actually looked a little nervous, now.

„The man seemed super freaked-out by the electronical hand, mostly, because it looked so extremely real. The barkeeper laughed and offered him to take the remote control himself, but the man didn't want to take it. „Make it stop!”, he said, „I hate scary stuff, make it stop!” So the barkeeper made the hand stop moving, and put the remote control away. „No worries! It's just a toy!”, he said, and the man seemed somewhat calm again.

But then... the hand started scratching at the glass again. Even though no one had touched the remote control.”

Max repeated the scratching movement against the candle jar once more.

„What is going on?”, the man asked the bar keeper, and he started to get hysterical and angry again. „I said I don't like this stuff, make it stop right now!”

The barkeeper seemed confused. „Oh, that's probably just Larry. He has

the second remote control, wait a second."

The barkeeper turned around and opened the door to a little kitchen next to the bar. „Larry?"

„Yes?", said some lanky guy, in there, and walked towards them.

„Hey, this one here doesn't like the hand-thing, maybe give it a rest for a couple minutes, yeah?", laughed the barkeeper."

Max was mimicking all the different voices slightly, excited when she saw Lucas smile at her as a result.

„Larry looked confused. „Huh? I didn't do the hand-thing, Peter."

„Wait, what?", asked the barkeeper, laughing a little. „Of course you did, it keeps moving around!"

Right then, the hand started moving again. It suddenly turned around, in the jar, and scratched and knocked louder than ever. It almost looked, as if the hand was pointing at someone... At the man with the beer.

„I said, stop it! Stop it!", the man screamed, but the hand only pointed harder in his direction.

Larry held both of his hands up. „I'm not doing that! Peter, come on, you need to stop this, he's terrified!"

„I'm not doing anything, either!", the barkeeper said, in confusion. The noise from the jar got louder and louder, the plastic hand moving and moving, and then...

„Fine, I'll admit it! I killed her! I did it!", the man screamed, and the other two saw him pull at his hair, looking completely insane.

The police arrived, a little later. Turns out, the guy had once killed a girl in that bar, and was convinced the hand in the jar was hers. But no one ever really found out, whether that was true, or not. Maybe it was just a weird, crazy horror toy that was somehow broken. The end."

Max smiled at Lucas. „So, what do you say? Scary enough?"

Lucas laughed. „I liked it! The different voices were nice.”

Max gave him a little bow and a grin. „Thank you, thank you.”

It was quiet for a moment. Then, Lucas asked: „So, do you want to go upstairs again, now?”

Max only smirked. „Nah. It's so much scarier, down here.”

And with that, she suddenly blew the candle out that stood between them, clouding the room in complete darkness. The last thing she saw was Lucas' surprised look, when she pulled him closer and kissed him again. Even here in the darkness, the look was priceless.

(The end.)